

When the trainer from KSDS first put a tiny puppy in my arms, he was eight weeks old and mostly fat tummy and had teeth like little needles. I remember feeling a sense of awe at the potential in this new baby, and a tremendous responsibility because someone somewhere was waiting for the independence this pup could one day bring.

I thought raising this pup would be a chance to give something back to a world which had treated me very well. What a surprise to discover that I received far more than I gave as a puppy raiser. I expected the joy of having a puppy in my life, but I didn't expect to meet so many wonderful people – people with similar interests who have become friends. Before I started raising puppies for KSDS, the thought of giving a speech was terrifying. But with a puppy by my side and with a message I want to share, I look forward to meeting and talking with people. The frosting on the cake is meeting the person paired with the puppy I raised, seeing the bond the new team has already formed, and being amazed at the astonishing dog “my” puppy has become.

- Rita Willson, Puppy Raiser in Iowa